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R 120354Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9620
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 5845

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000442

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MLS BLACKSHAW

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OTRA](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR USCIRF DELEGATION TO VISIT
VIETNAM, MAY 11-22, 2009

REF: STATE 047348

¶1. Embassy Hanoi warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) delegation to travel to Hanoi, May 11-22, 2009.

¶2. Hanoi Control Officer:
Christian Marchant, Political Officer
Tel: (84-4)850-5000 ext. 5096
Cell: (090) 484-1023
Fax: (84-4)850-5098
Unclass E-mail: MarchantCM@state.gov

Political Counselor, Control Officer, and Embassy vehicles will meet USCIRF delegation at the airport.

¶3. Hotel reservations have been made at the.

Sofitel Metropole Hanoi Hotel
15 Ngo Quyen Street
Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: (84-4) 3826-6919
Fax: (84-4) 3826-6920
www.sofitel.com/1555

¶4. Diplomatic/Official Entry Visas: USG Employees seeking to conduct official business under the auspices of the U.S. Mission to Vietnam are required, repeat required, to follow Post guidance in obtaining appropriate diplomatic/official entry visas. Prospective USG travelers must fax (84-4-3850-5010) their visa applications (may be downloaded from the Vietnamese Embassy website in the U.S.) and passport bio-pages to the Human Resources Office of the Embassy at least 15 business days before their expected departure date for assistance in obtaining appropriate visas. Embassy Hanoi may withhold country clearance if potential USG travelers do not obtain the correct visa in the appropriate manner. Please contact the Embassy Human Resources Officer at (84)(4) 3850-5000 (extension 7133), if you have any questions or concerns regarding this process. Travelers should always carry a copy of their visa application with an original photo attached to it, as Vietnamese Customs Officials may ask for it upon arrival.

¶5. Security Information:

a) Cities in Vietnam have the typical crime problems of other large cities throughout the world. Pickpockets and petty crime occur and appear to be increasing; though violent crimes such as armed robbery are still relatively rare in Vietnam. Drug use is becoming more and more of a problem in Vietnam. The Embassy recommends that travelers use only metered taxis. Traffic in Vietnam can appear chaotic and there is a real threat of being involved in a traffic or pedestrian accident. Pedestrians unaccustomed to walking across the street in Hanoi, HCMC or other Vietnamese cities should be extra cautious.

b) Recently people flying through Hanoi's airport have been subject to a scam involving fraudulent contract drivers who may address them by name. USG personnel, if not met by an Embassy driver with an

Embassy badge, will be met by a contract driver who will have a printed sheet with their name and Embassy seal on it. Personnel should also confirm before entering the vehicle where the driver is taking them.

c) Vietnamese security personnel may place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephone conversations, fax transmissions, and e-mail communications may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched.

¶6. Electronic Devices in the Embassy: The Embassy and Consulate General strictly control the entry of laptop computers, personal digital assistants (PDAS) and other electronic devices into Embassy and Consulate General facilities. If you plan to bring official electronic equipment to Post, please advise the control officer and the RSO of the equipment, make/model, and serial or other control number in your request for country clearance. Providing this information in advance will speed the entry of the equipment into the Embassy and Consulate General. Upon arrival, the Information Management Specialist or the Regional Security Office must inspect all laptop computers before entering Embassy or Consulate General facilities. Personally owned or unapproved USG equipment (which includes all PDA's, cell phones, and pagers) - may not enter the controlled access areas.

¶7. Transiting through China: If you plan to transit via China, you will need a Chinese transit visa or you will not be boarded on your outward bound flight from Vietnam.

¶8. Fund Cite and Expenses: Post acknowledges receipt of fundcite.

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